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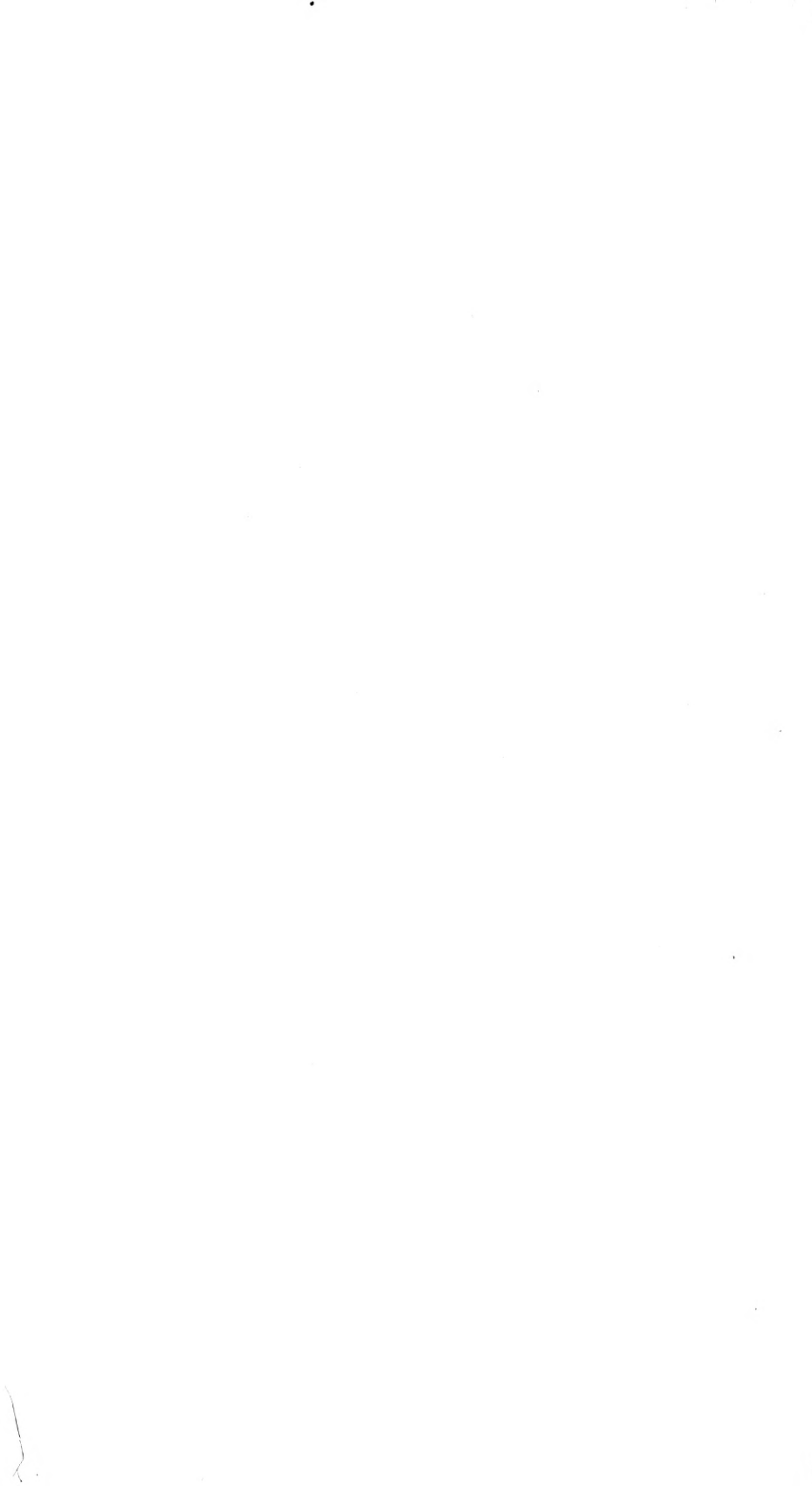
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MR. SENTER'S
ORATION.





AN
ORATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Washington Benevolent Society,

OF THE COUNTY OF

HERKIMER,

ON THE 22d FEBRUARY, 1817,

BY NATHANIEL G. M. SENTER.

HERKIMER:
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1817.

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MR. NATHANIEL G. M. SENTER,

SIR,

IN compliance with a resolution of the Washington Benevolent Society, of the county of Herkimer, passed on the 22d day of February instant—we present you the thanks of the Society, for the excellent Oration, which on that day you delivered before the said Society—and request a copy thereof for publication.

Respectfully yours, &c

MATTHEW MYERS,
PHILO M HACKLEY, } Committee.
GEORGE H. FEETER,

February 24th, 1817.



TO THE COMMITTEE FROM THE WASHINGTON BENEVOLENT SOCIETY,
GENTLEMEN,

I receive your flattering request, and comply with it, more from a sincere wish to evince to the world my great regard for the principles, and my veneration for the illustrious man, who is the subject of the discourse, than any desire to give publicity to my feeble talents. With a hearty wish that his greatness never may be obscured, and his virtues never forgotten, I resign to you the desired copy.

With respect and esteem,

I remain your obedient servant,

NATHANIEL G. M. SENTER.

AN
ORATION, &c.

BRETHREN OF THE WASHINGTON BENEVOLENT SOCIETY,
AND FELLOW-CITIZENS :

IT must be pleasing, in the sight of Heaven, to see a Nation, crowding to its temples, to commemorate the birth of the *Founder of its freedom and glory*. It is incumbent on us to pay just tribute to the memory of those who have been illustrious in the service of their country.

The 22d of February, 1732, gave birth to our beloved and lamented WASHINGTON—justly celebrated for his heroism and achievements—illustrious for his talents and virtue; and immortal, in the unspotted purity of his heart, and the unsullied probity of his mind.—Behold millions, this day, pouring forth their thanks to Heaven, and hailing in joyous *Jubilee*, the morn, which ushered in this splendid Luminary of human greatness. He rose, like the *Sun in the east*, SILENT IN THE GRANDFUR OF HIS OWN LIGHT.—In the zenith of his glory, he, like that fountain of light, illumined, in *cloudless splendour*, the objects which surrounded him.—His descent to the grave, was like the declension of that irradiated orb, in all the majesty of retiring lustre.—On that day, so mournful, THE HEAVENS WITHDREW ITS GLORY FROM OUR VIEW.—Our country in the first hours of grief, seemed inconsolable for its loss. The world said, thus died the *hero without parallel*—the statesman without reproach—the man without disguise; and the father without a fault. Humanity lost its noblest ornament—the world its *greatest glory*. It was not the accidental combination of splendid talents with inglorious views—or the ethereal fire of

genius, with the grossness of infirmity. It was not the lustre of blazing and ignited ambition, or *the majesty of usurpation*; that characterised this immortal man.—His greatness had in it something *more divine*—to rescue his country from domination—to secure their freedom—organize and dignify a government, whose destiny he was called to controul—and lay the foundation of his country's glory, was the grand and God-like purpose of this illustrious and venerable man. *Virginia* gave him birth. Descended from a venerable ancestry, he ever secured ambitions of adding increased honors to his progenitors, *by his own great deeds.*

At the age of 19 he was appointed by the unanimous wishes of his countrymen, one of the Adjutant Generals of Virginia. At 21 he was deputed by the state to proceed as envoy to the western frontiers. In the same year he was appointed Lieutenant Colonel, and in his first attack *he was successful and victorious.* In the year 1755 he attended General Braddock, as aid, in the ever memorable campaign in which he fell.—Soon after *this defeat* he was appointed to the responsible command of Chief, *in and over* the forces of Virginia. During the inhuman massacre of his countrymen on the frontiers, he was heard to declare, “He was melted with a deadly sorrow; and that if a sacrifice would stop the effusion of human blood, *he would sacrifice himself for his country's good.*” In 1758 he resigned his commission as provincial officer, and received the thanks of his fellow-citizens, and the officers of the British army. In 1774 he was appointed a delegate to the Congress which met in Philadelphia, for the purpose of laying the foundation of a federal government. Engaged in that work neither opposition nor opprobrium, *seemed to affect his determined and resistless vigor*—contumely hurled its envenomed shafts in vain, *and envy with her poisoned Chalice shrunk from his presence, before its offerings were refused.* The same year he was appointed to the chief command of the colonial forces. Here presented itself an affecting and glorious scene, “A coun-

dry *swearing* to support its Chief Magistrate with their lives, and to adhere to him in the support of American liberty." Invested with supreme command he proceeds to Cambridge to organize and discipline his infant army. We soon find him engaged in offensive operations, which terminated gloriously for American arms—in the evacuation of Boston by General Howe.—For this he receives the thanks of his country; and a medal is struck in commemoration of that auspicious event.

On the 27th of August he finds his little army defeated by superior numbers at the battle of Long-Island; and in the presence of the enemy effects one of the most masterly retreats recorded in our history. In a subsequent campaign we find victory again perching on his standard, and in the battles of Trenton and Princeton fresh laurels encircle his brows. In 1778 he again receives the thanks of his country, for the victory at Monmouth over the royal forces. In 1781 he averts the dreaded rupture between the French and American armies, and in that memorable year strikes the mortal blow to British tyranny and usurpation—by the capture and capitulation of Lord Cornwallis. Again this venerable and distinguished hero receives the thanks of his beloved country. Peace now, *like the morning star*, began to beam upon his anxious and afflicted country.—“The stern and visaged front of war gave place to smiles of peace.”

The arduous task assigned him, accomplished, the illustrious founder of our liberties meditates a retirement from his labors.—Previous to the disbanding of the army under his command, *his yet bleeding heart* was suddenly torn in anguish for the safety of the liberties he had founded.—A conspiracy designed to pluck the crown of immortality from this champion of freedom, *burst forth* in all the malice of envy and machination. The eager and penetrating glance of WASHINGTON foresaw the tempest. At this moment of impending ruin, this illustrious hero in doubt of its reality, PAUSED while he collected in array the energies of his mind.

His country lost in the anxious epilepsy of dread and love for the freedom they had acquired, determined to await the decision of this peerless statesman. The baptismal dove descended in cloudless effulgence, and with the spotless wings of its protection hovered around his holy person. *The spirit of inspiration lit on Washington.*—Awakened and enlightened he arrested rebellion, and disarmed its crested affrontery with the blush of affection; and while the sceptre of disaffection was yet falling, he rouses his misguided country to their insecurity and peril. In view of this scene, Columbia cast an anxious eye towards the stern, enlightened dictator of the age. Invulnerable in the purity of his patriotism, he stood *like the towering oak of his native soil*, inflexible and unshaken amid the tempest.

Luminous and resistless in persuasion, he subsidized the allegiance of the army, the prerogatives of reason, and the energy of *his own great mind*, to crush the impious demons as they advanced to the unhallowed conflict.—What must have been the exulting sensations of his countrymen, when they found him triumphant? Military faction withered *like the aspen leaf* before his eloquent rebukes. Before *him* the aspiring demagogue shrunk like the weed before the deadly Upas. Intrigue and faction shed their untimely fruit, like a Fig Tree when shaken of a mighty wind.—Artifice and disguise unrobed themselves before his searching eye.—The altar and the God of faction tumbled together in the dust before his inspiring presence.

Having accomplished this, the world beheld him, like the illustrious Roman, retiring from the field of glory and renown.—On the 18th June, 1783, he surrenders up the high commission, with the powers vested in him, to an admiring people. It was now that crowns, sceptres and sovereignty became valueless and contemptible.—He returns ALL to his country—but the glory, and imperishable fame which hovered around his holy person. *Of that he could not divest himself*; for it was the irradiated and im-

passioned stamp of immortality, fixed on him by *Divinity himself*.

The father could not leave his family without bequeathing to them a Covenant, to preserve their Independence and love of country.

Hear what our venerable father hath said :—"There are four things essential to the welfare and existence of the United States, as an Independent power.

1st. An indissoluble union of the States, under one federal head.

2d. A sacred regard to public justice.

3d. The adoption of a proper peace establishment.

4th. A pacific disposition among the people, which will induce them to forget their animosities and prejudices.

These are the pillars on which the glorious fabric of our Independence and National character must be supported."

Thus has he left a lasting Testament of his wisdom and love; and thus has he in humble imitation of the Great Architect of the world, delivered to his chosen people the table of his commandments. He retired *but to re-appear*—he obscured himself but to shine again, in redoubled and re-illuminated *glory*. Faithful to his affections—absorbed in the delicate remembrance of the sufferings, the joys and triumphs of his brethren in arms—he convenes them for the last time to receive his paternal precepts—blessing them in humble imitation of the Saviour of the world; he covers them with benediction and prayer.—His country *stood spectators of this sublime and priestly scene*. Until *this time*, grief knew not its dignity, nor sorrow its silence.

Amid the conflict of passion and tempest of tenderness, which swelled his mighty heart, love of country shone in splendid preeminence and state. "Then burst his mighty heart, and in his mantle muffling up his *head*," he bid an adieu to his illustrious companions in arms. Not so did Cæsar, whose ambition and lawless thirst of power, prostrated and extinguished the freedom of his coun-

try. Not so the proud imperial victor of Austerlitz, whose inglorious usurpation, have sullied the splendour of his conquests.

The stupendous work is not yet finished, but from the bosom of retirement and domestic love, his country again calls him to her defence. He hears with solicitude the pressing call, and again, with majestic resignation, he obeys her summons. Once more an organ of the public voice, he is clothed with a Senatorial dignity; and the hero is lost in the affectionate statesman. A delegate from Virginia to the National Convention at Philadelphia, he is unanimously elected President of that venerable body.

On the 17th of September, 1787, they finished their labors. The exclaiming voice of our mothers and daughters on this happy event, was:—"HE IS OUR PROTECTOR AND DEFENDER." What are tombs, mosoleums or triumphant arches, to this grateful and imperishable monument? On the 14th of April, it was announced that the voice of his country had vested him with the Chief Magistracy of the United States. Again he swears fidelity to his country, and on the Altar of Religion swears also to preserve and defend the Constitution, of which he was the founder. Amid thousands of his adoring countrymen, appeared this veteran father of our liberties—swearing *fidelity to his family*. This was a moment of grandeur of feeling—of sublime political joy. He was now crowned with civil glory—the garland of fame was wove with the oaken wreath of victory. Immediately on the organization of the departments of state, WASHINGTON proceeded to appoint those to office, whose experience, probity and love of country, rendered them suitable candidates for those important functions.

In the selection of these characters, fellow-citizens, he wisely appointed the illustrious Hamilton to the head of the Treasury—a man deservedly celebrated for his inflexible integrity, talents and patriotism. To the War Department, General Knox, a faithful companion in the strug-

gles for liberty. As the head of the Judiciary he appointed the venerable and experienced statesman John Jay—justly deserving of that particular distinction, arising from wisdom, purity of mind, and inflexible honor in the discharge of public duty. These men ever continued faithful to their trust—ornaments of their country, and *examples to the rising age*. During the war of 1794. between Great Britain and France, that turbulent Republic, incensed at the treaty made between England and the United States, openly, in violation of the laws of nations, and insulting to the honor of our country, deputed her Minister to this country, instructing him to assist in supporting the depredations, then making on the commerce of England and her dependances. Our illustrious Chief Magistrate, in conformity to his proclamation of neutrality, directed the recall of the French Minister, Mr. Genet.

Ambitious as WASHINGTON ever was, to complete the political edifice he had designed, he was not less anxious to preserve it entire, from the attacks of foreign influence and insult. He rose, in the majesty of legitimate and parental power, and shielded that people, for whom he had so often unsheathed his sword. Neither vehemence of opposition—the venality of foreign intrigue, nor the impending frowns of political tempests, awed or appalled him. Faithful to his country—loyal to his trust—and just to his God, he appeared immoveably intent on checking the torrent of Gallic corruption and philosophy—which seemed rolling from the Continent, menacing in its fury, not only the freedom, but the altars of our country. To his discernment and decision, is owing the tranquillity which succeeded the abortive efforts of Genet, and his coadjutors, in their insidious attempts to destroy the peace and sovereignty of our Republic.

Having adjusted all differences with the courts of Great Britain and Spain, and laid the foundation of peace with the turbulent Republic of France—the venerable father of American liberty, again retires to taste the sweets of domestic repose. On the 17th September, 1796, he ad-

addresses his beloved countrymen, and strictly, in conformity to his illustrious example, he recommends a cautious jealousy of foreign influence—a pure love of Constitution and country—an inflexible regard to public justice, and detestation of faction and tyranny.—In this valedictory effusion of unparalleled patriotism, and unexampled love of country, we find the pillars of our freedom and Independence. *Hear again what our father hath said—*“Let me warn you, in the most solemn manner, against the baneful effects of the spirit of party. The alternate domination of one faction over another, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism; but this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result, gradually incline the minds of men, to seek security and repose, in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later, the chief of some prevailing faction, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, *on the ruins of public liberty.*”

“Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence, I conjure you *to believe me*, fellow-citizens, the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of Republican government. But, that jealousy, to be useful, *must be impartial*, else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defence against it. Excessive partiality for one foreign Nation, and excessive dislike of another, cause those whom they actuate, to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. *Real Patriots*, who may resist the intrigues of the favorite, are liable to become *suspected and odious*, while *its tools and dupes* usurp the applause and confidence of the people, *to surrender their interests.*”

From the cares of public life, and the numerous honors conferred on him by a grateful people—he returns to the humble and dignified vocation of a tiller of the earth.

—Faithful and fortunate, in the discharge of every duty which connected him with the public weal—he resumes, like the illustrious Cincinnatus, the labors of industry.—In this scene, we see fully exemplified, the unsullied probity of his mind, and the unspotted purity of his heart. It was an act which stamped his character, the most glorious—most patriotic, *and most virtuous of modern ages.*

During his retirement, the aspiring, disorganizing government of France, again called forth the spirit and energy of the American Councils. To resent the unjustifiable insult, offered to our sovereignty, in the outrages on our public Ministers; and to redress, at the threshold of arms and resistance, the wrongs committed on our commerce, John Adams, then President of the United States, recommended vigorous measures of Defence.—The American Eagle again clenched the Olive Branch and the arrow, and proudly hovered over the destiny of our beloved country. As soon as the adoption of this measure was probable, the eyes of his country were turned on WASHINGTON.—Again was this aged hero called to the defence of our liberties and Independence. He consents to assume the command of our army; and proceeds to organize them, and hurl defiance upon the Directory of France. The event justified the most sanguine expectations of our National Legislature; and the impious hopes of an invading foe, were crushed and confounded.

At the moment when our citizens were exulting in the success of our diplomatic mission to the Republic of France; the Angel of mercy was sent to convey his spirit to the mansions of rest. Amid the pomp of unaffected grief, and splendour of silent sorrow, we beheld the spirit of our venerable and lamented father called to the bosom of its Creator.

On that memorable day, the 13th December, 1799, in the perfect possession of his serene and God-like mind, he yielded to the conflicts of death.—*Behold the end of this great and virtuous Patriot.* Founded, as was his principles, on the immutable basis of justice and truth—

fortified, as was his views, by the purity and integrity of public virtue; and, ever impressed with a humble conscientiousness of his responsibility, to the Great Father of Spirits—his commencement *in life*—his career *through it*, and his departure *from it*, was *cloudlessly glorious irreproachable and exemplary*.

Associated in the stupendous work, of founding a new Republic, we find a constellation of warriors and martyrs, hovering round a Sun, from which they received glory and lustre. Next to our beloved WASHINGTON, in the confidence of a grateful country, was *Warren*—the first martyr of distinction, to the cause of American freedom. Bunker's awful height, still proclaims the gallantry and devotion of this intrepid hero. Next on the list of departed worthies, is the gallant *Greene*, who, with our illustrious *Hamilton*, possessed an unbounded share of the confidence of their great Chief, the venerable WASHINGTON.—Amid these splendid characters, who have given a fame to this country, *Knox* sustains an important rank. As a testimony of his private worth, and public services, he was a confident of the father of our country, in his most conflicting trials; and, on the institution of the Society of Cincinnati, he was elected to the honorable office of Secretary.

In the number of departed heroes, who contributed greatly to establish our Independence, are the lamented *Gates* and *Lincoln*—deservedly enrolled among the most valiant and inflexible of American Patriots. But chiefly thou, *Oh Lingan*, calls for the tributary tear.—Aged and infirm, in the service of thy country, “*thou fell'st a glorious martyr*.—Covered with military and civic glory—gored with wounds, inflicted by the merciless hands of an infuriated and incenced populace—thy death was glorious; and in the pomp of sacrificial offering, thou hast erected an imperishable mosoleum—thou has left a deathless name. To thy name, *Montgomery*, a Nation sheds the tear of grateful sorrow.—The Goddess of victory was hovering over thy head, when death, envious of the lau-

reled honors, which awaited the capture of Quebec, clasped his favorite Son to his bosom. Less glorious, but not less distinguished in the annals of our country, are the names of *Wayne*, and the intrepid *Mercer*. These, with the devoted *Worcester*—the gallant *Schuyler*—the intrepid *Putnam*—the generous *M'Dougal*, and the patriotic *Clinton*—a distinguished band of warriors have been called to the arms of death.

Encompassed by such a galaxy of splendid geniuses, we might suppose that the glory of the man, whose birth we now celebrate, must have derived some of its lustre from theirs. Although they shone with brilliancy—their splendor was borrowed from that glorious character, around which they revolved, like the Planetary Satellites in the Heavens, around the Luminary of light. *Of his character, who can speak with justice—of his fame, who can add by eulogy.* “The grandeur of antiquity, and the fame of modern greatness, are diminished before him.” “The destroyers of Nations, stood abashed at the majesty of his virtues.”—It reprov'd the intemperance of their ambition, and darkened the splendor of victory. Heroes of integrity have had their great virtues eclipsed by concomitant vices.—*But Washington's glory was never sullied—his splendor never darkened.* In his orbit, his lustre was without spot—without eclipse and without conjunction.

Having accomplished the stupendous task assigned him, *he took his flight towards Heaven*—“not like Mahomet, for his memory is immortal, without the fiction of a miracle—not like Elijah for it is not known on whom his mantle shall descend; but in humble imitation of the Omnipotent Architect of the Universe, who returned from a created world, to contemplate from his Throne, the stupendous fabric he had erected.”

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